

**SIDNEY AND BEATRICE
WEBB**

conscientious objector Outside the
family circle, too,
countless young men in whom they were
interested were
caught up and perished in the fiery whirlpool
Nor, in the
wider sphere of social relations, could they fail
to feel the
whole thing as a threat, alarming, nay
terrifying, on the
part of the non-rational elements in life which
they would
have liked to be able to leave out They
saw emotion,
senseless and shattering, sweep up and over
order and reason
and progress and good sense, over good-
will and even
over decency The orgy of sheer sentiment
was nauseating
to them, the disclosure of subterranean forces
such as they
had not allowed for, and from which they
shrank back in
horror, sped arrows of destroying doubt to the
very centre of
their thinking It is significant that they
have nowhere, in
direct terms, tried to measure or place this
appalling phen-
omenon True, in their great manifesto
against Capitalism,
The Decay of Capitalist Civilisation, published in
1923, there are
a couple of trenchant pages, entitled "How
Wars Occur",
but this passage has only to be re-read, to-day,
to puzzle the
reader by its inadequacy, in every respect, to
the fearsome
thing with which it purports to deal Never
has any great
event been treated by them in a manner so
neaily perfunc-
tory Is one wrong in feeling, behind this rare
perfuncton-
ness, something like an emotional, even an
intellectual, fear⁹
Their public attitude to the war was
conventional With-
out shanng any of its ugly exaggerations, they
took, in broad

